Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Annual Report 2013 – 2014

THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL
ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Alberta Government

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Letter of Transmittal

May 22, 2015

Honourable Rachel Notley
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B7

Dear Premier Notley:

I am pleased to present the 25th Annual Report of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This report covers the activities undertaken by your Council during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014. It is submitted in accordance with s.7 (1) of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act for your presentation to the Legislative Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Carmen Wyton, Chair

On Behalf of,

Mike Hambly, Chair 2013-2014
Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Reflections from the Chair

As my role on the Council has come to an end, I am pleased to have the opportunity to once again present the Annual Report of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities (Council). This report provides information on the activities the Council has been involved in during the past fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

I served as a member of the Council from 2005 to 2012 and as Council Chair until March 2014.

During my time on the Council, there have been many developments and advancements with respect to awareness and inclusion for persons with disabilities. The Council has a unique role in providing a pan-disability, cross-ministry perspective through advice and recommendations to the Government of Alberta on policies and services that impact persons with disabilities.

This past year presented opportunity for renewal of the Council. I was pleased to see amendments to the Council's legislation that will give Council a more strategic role in their advisory capacity to government by influencing policy and making a positive difference to Albertans with disabilities. This renewed mandate will help ensure that Government and community are working closer than ever before to address issues that are of interest to persons with disabilities.

The Honourable Frank Oberle, former Deputy Chair of Council, was instrumental in ensuring that the new members were appointed to Council in September 2013 and supported the renewal of the Council through the changes to legislation. Council was also pleased to welcome the Honourable Naresh Bhardwaj, Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities.

It was with great sadness, that on February 28, 2014, the Council learned of the passing of Marlin Styner. Marlin was appointed as a member of Council on December 2005 and served as Chair from 2008 to 2012. Council created the Marlin Styner Achievement Award in 2012 in his honour. Marlin will be remembered for his positive attitude and not allowing his disability to get in the way of accomplishing his goals. The community has lost a leader who was an inspiration for many people. Marlin never stopped working towards an environment that fully included persons with disabilities.

My role as Chair on Council has ended, but my commitment and dedication to the disability community will continue.

Sincerely,

Mike Hambly, Chair
Premier's Council on the
Status of Persons with Disabilities

Vision and Mission

Vision

Alberta is an inclusive and barrier-free society.

Mission

The mission of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities (Council) is to advise, report to, and make recommendations to the Government of Alberta about matters relating to the opportunity for full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the life of the province. It does this by listening to the opinions of the disability community, communicating their ideas and concerns to government and the broader community, and working with governments, community organizations, and other stakeholders toward solutions.

Renewal of Council Creates New Opportunities Ahead

Changes to the Legislation

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act was first enacted in 1988, and was amended in December 2013. The Act renews and reinvigorates the role of the Council by building a broader mandate and closer relationship with communities and government. It will help to align the Council's work with the direction of Alberta's Social Policy Framework and provide valuable advice at the program level.

There are several significant new roles for the Council under the amendments:

- **Council will advise government about reviews and development of policies, programs and initiatives, and their implementation.**
- **Council will advise government about alignment between policies and strategies affecting persons with disabilities and the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**
- **Council will provide input into the development of government departments' business plans with respect to impacts on persons with disabilities.**
- **Council can identify opportunities for supporting sustainability of services through innovation.**
- **Council supports the relationship between government and community service providers.**

Highlights of Council Activities

Council members live in various communities throughout Alberta and they communicated via e-mail, held regular teleconferences, and participated in two in-person meetings held in Edmonton. The Council focused its work on the following key areas:

- Provided advice to government on policies, programs and services that may impact persons with disabilities.
- Engaged with community and stakeholders to remain knowledgeable and current on diverse disability issues ensuring a community perspective is included when providing advice to the Alberta government.

Some of the Council's work falls under two of its Standing Committees: Transitions and Caregiver and Disability Supports Workforce.

Transitions Committee

The Transition Committee was formed to examine challenges and opportunities related to movement from one stage of life to another. Activities of the committee may include collaboration, consultation, policy recommendations and identifying unmet needs.

Over the past year, the committee focused its activities on hearing what challenges individuals with disabilities experience when trying to enter or advance in the labour force, and supporting initiatives that work toward addressing these challenges.

The Council was pleased to submit feedback on the Alberta Employment First Strategy. Some highlights of the feedback are:

- It is critical to remember that no one single approach will work. Persons with disabilities should be afforded the same opportunities, variety and level of services offered to all Albertans. Persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. Their diverse interests and abilities need to be taken into account in every approach being considered.
- The Council fully endorses an employment strategy for persons with disabilities and will fully support it. Council is excited to see concrete steps being taken to ensure Albertans with disabilities reach their full potential and are viewed as valuable and contributing members of their community.

Council participated in the February Employment First Strategy training webcast: Accommodations in the Workplace. The sessions provided a forum

for individuals, families, agencies and employers to have an open dialogue for discussing issues related to employment for individuals with disabilities. Discussions focused on how everyone could work together to create inclusive workplaces and communities.

Council members attended the May Disability Innovations in Technology and Employment symposium in support of the Employment First initiative.

Council participated in the inaugural meeting of the Private Sector Employer Advisory Council to provide a disability perspective. The Private Sector Employer Advisory Council was formed to create more employment opportunities for Albertans with disabilities. This voluntary council includes employers from across industry sectors throughout the province and meets regularly to discuss challenges and identify solutions.

Caregiver and Disability Supports Workforce Committee

The Caregiver and Disability Supports Workforce Committee continues its work to address challenges and opportunities related to the workforce which provides care and support to persons with disabilities.

Feedback from a cross-disability perspective was provided on the Human Services Workforce Alliance Strategic Plan. Some highlights of the feedback are:

- Council appreciates the strategy's comprehensive approach and are pleased that it acknowledges that "compensation must be at a level that allows for sustainable life, and ultimately is competitive with comparable work elsewhere." Competitive compensation levels are essential for the sector to be able to successfully implement the other goals in this document.
- Geographic differences may have a significant impact on the effectiveness or applicability of some of the strategies identified. Although factors such as declining unemployment rates and rising labour costs are provincial in scope, geographic variability needs to be considered. Also, the level and type of services an individual requires in a rural setting vs. an urban setting should be considered with any provincial strategy.

The Workforce Alliance has shifted into a phase of implementation and the Council looks forward to future opportunities to support the work, especially in the area of education and training.

Additional Advice to Government

Alberta Budget 2013 — Impacts for Albertans with Disabilities

In the spring of 2013, Council members attended a technical budget briefing held by Human Services. The Council recognized that the fiscal environment presented both challenges and opportunities for government, some that might significantly impact persons with disabilities. Feedback from a cross-disability perspective was submitted to the government on a number of areas including education, health, transportation, programs and services.

In March 2014, Council members also attended the budget briefing held by Human Services for the 2014 budget.

Elections Alberta

Representatives from Elections Alberta requested a meeting with the Council in October 2012 to discuss the experience of Albertans with disabilities when participating in the provincial election process. The Council provided feedback about the website and current resources based on Council's own experiences and from a cross-disability perspective. The Council's feedback included what was currently working well, and suggestions were offered to increase accessibility for Albertans with disabilities participating in the electoral process.

Employment Standards Code

In March 2014, the Government of Alberta began a review of the Employment Standards Code. The Council was pleased that there was opportunity for a public consultation to help improve the laws that govern Albertan workplaces and that specific consideration was provided in the survey for feedback about regulations affecting persons with disabilities.

The Council submitted written comments from a cross-disability perspective on how the regulations affect persons with disabilities. Some of the feedback included the following:

- Remove the section in the code that permits an employer to pay a person with a disability less than minimum wage.
- Define the term internship so there are no misunderstandings regarding the status of individuals on work experience placements or on the job training. Wages for interns who are out in an approved course of study should reflect the fair market value for the work being performed with no exemption from the minimum wage.
- While caregivers are included under the code, survey questions did not address specific areas of concern to this group. In the caregiver field, references to minimum wage and allowance for extended hours of work are areas of controversy. It will be important to ensure that any changes to the Employment Standards Code in this area align with standards being developed in other areas of government.

Municipal Government Act Review

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) provides the legislative framework to guide the operations of municipalities in Alberta. The current MGA empowers municipalities with the authority and flexibility to provide services in the best interests of the community.

Given the potential impact of changes to the MGA on communities across Alberta, the Council wanted to learn more and contribute

In the dialogue, Council members focused their inquiry within the portion of the MGA that speaks to managing growth and development. It was primarily this section that addressed the kind of community considerations that the Council believes could have potential impact on persons with disabilities.

Council members participated in public consultations about the review of the MGA in a number of ways. In addition to reviewing the materials made available through the consultation website, they also attended technical sessions and open houses.

Albertans Health Charter and the Alberta Health Advocate Regulation

In January 2014, Albertans were encouraged to provide feedback into the Health Charter and proposed Health Advocate Regulation. The Council had opportunity to provide insights from a cross-disability perspective on challenges faced when trying to access the health care system in Alberta.

Some key areas included in Council's feedback were:

- Persons with disabilities need to be specifically referenced in both documents to ensure that they don't continue to face barriers when trying to access the health care system.
- A recommendation was provided to add an overarching statement at the beginning of the Charter on the importance of the caregiver role.
- Specific examples were provided to ensure inclusive plain language is used throughout the documents.
- Ensure that the health care system is inclusive and accessible to all citizens, including persons with disabilities.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is celebrated every year on December 3rd in order to promote awareness and education about the rights and abilities of persons with disabilities, while celebrating the achievements of individuals with disabilities and promoting their ownership in a society for all. IDPD is recognized by various communities across the globe.

Every year, the Council encourages communities to organize IDPD events across Shannon. Council supports an IDPD Events and Planning Committee made up of representatives from local communities. The committee gathers annually to plan for any celebrations that will be occurring in Shannon. The committee will work with local

community organizations to coordinate events in their communities or provide support where it is needed. Each year, the committee chooses a theme for IDPD and develops a unique logo to represent the theme.

Every community would like to see information in order to plan for IDPD events and Planning Committee please contact the Council office at 780-512-1340.

The Council continues to provide funding to help cover the costs associated with IDPD events. Council also promotes IDPD events on its official Facebook page and encourages local businesses and organizations to celebrate IDPD by displaying signs in their windows and posting information.

Governor's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Awards 2013

Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Award Recipients

Premier's Council Gary McPherson Leadership Award

Neil Pierce - Edmonton

For nearly 30 years, Neil Pierce has worked passionately on behalf of individuals with disabilities. Neil met Gary McPherson while working with the Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA), and they participated on many boards together.

Neil was the recipient of the CPA's Honourable Lois Hole Community Development Award and was recognized by the Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers' Association with a social justice award.

Neil co-served as the Executive Director of the CPA (Alberta) and the Alberta Paraplegic Foundation for more than 12 years. He was instrumental in developing numerous programs, including a Calgary cross-disability employment service, Champions Career Centre and the Alberta Disabilities Forum.

Neil served as the President of the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society of Alberta for nine years before assuming a national role as Vice President of Government Relations and Volunteer Engagement. During his time at the MS Society, he was instrumental in developing the MS Community Advisory Council and was part of a team that established the Alberta and MS Regional Research and Training Centre. Albertans with disabilities have and will continue to benefit from the leadership Neil has shown in the disability field.

The Gary McPherson Leadership Award is awarded to individual Albertans who have demonstrated outstanding leadership or achievement in enriching the lives of persons with disabilities and who exemplify the qualities and values Dr. Gary McPherson held.

Tracey Howell, Council member; Neil Pierce, President of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Alberta with the Gary McPherson Leadership Award and Honourable Frank Oberle, Deputy Chair of Council.

Premier's Council Marlin Styner Achievement Award

Emily Hutcheon – Calgary

Emily Hutcheon is a graduate student in the Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies program at the University of Calgary. Her current thesis focuses on the ways in which individuals across the ability spectrum think about, talk about, and experience resilience and vulnerability.

In 2011 and 2012, she served on the board of the Canadian Disability Studies Association as their student representative and voting member. Through her involvement in several community organizations, including Citizens for Social Justice (a student collective), the Centre for Community Engaged Learning at the University of Calgary and the Calgary Centre for Global Community, Emily is cultivating her own style of quiet leadership and partnership.

She is interested in social change and grassroots organizing, and continues to develop her sensibilities as an activist, critical thinker and engaged citizen. Emily envisions communities characterized by authentic connection across human difference.

The Marlin Styner Achievement Award is awarded to an individual Albertan who has a disability and who, through their personal or professional achievements, has brought greater recognition to the abilities of all persons with disabilities.

Bill Brandon, Council member; Left to right: Mike Hambly, Council Chair and Emily Hutcheon with the Marlin Styner Achievement Award.

Premier's Council Award of Excellence in Public Awareness

Russell Christian – La Crete

Russell Christian has lived in La Crete Continuing Care since 2003, after he sustained a C4 spinal cord injury in 2002. Wanting to improve the transportation issues experienced by persons with disabilities trying to access their communities in the North, Russell helped initiate the Northern Wheels in Action group. Their goal was to speak out about the transportation barriers for persons with disabilities.

This year marked the second annual Wheel-a-thon, in which Russell, accompanied by other individuals who use power wheelchairs and community members on bikes, travelled 50 km to raise awareness of the transportation issues in Northern Alberta communities. Through this event, Russell is working to raise enough funds to purchase an accessible bus for the residents of La Crete.

Russell has had a huge impact on the communities in Northern Alberta by advocating, educating and promoting activities like the Annual Wheel-a-thon.

The Award of Excellence in Public Awareness is awarded to a person, team or organization that has increased the public's awareness of the benefits and value of a barrier-free, inclusive community.

Russell Christian with the Award of Excellence in Public Awareness and Peter F Braun, Mackenzie County Councillor representing LaCrete.

Two Premier's Council Award of Excellence in Employment

ATCO Structures & Logistics – Calgary

ATCO Structures & Logistics is committed to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their work environment.

Management at ATCO Structures & Logistics routinely ask themselves, "How can we make our workplace culture more inclusive of persons with disabilities, and what is my role?" Not only do they recruit candidates from disability employment organizations in Calgary, they initiated a training session with new hires to educate all employees about diversity within their organization. They also attend conferences and forums to learn about workplace inclusion and recruitment strategies for persons with disabilities.

ATCO Structures & Logistics realized they did not have a policy to support persons with disabilities who may need some form of accommodation in the workplace, and have since created one that aligns with their current principles and objectives as a company.

ATCO Structures & Logistics has demonstrated leadership by promoting the inclusion of more employees with disabilities, reducing barriers and implementing inclusive strategies for all employees.

Tara MacDonald, Recruitment Advisor and Dale Hindmarsh, Manager, Recruitment and Diversity accepting the Award of Excellence in Employment on behalf of ATCO Structures & Logistics.

WorleyParsons – Edmonton

WorleyParsons is a leading provider of project delivery and consulting services to the resource and energy sectors. This global company considers the diversity of their employees to be one of their greatest strengths.

WorleyParsons recently wrapped up a year-long pilot program to increase awareness about diversity and inclusion and encourage employees to incorporate inclusiveness into their everyday business.

As a result of feedback from their employees, WorleyParsons made improvements to many of their facilities that went above and beyond code requirements. They volunteered to go through an accessibility audit with the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities to assess 10 of their Edmonton locations. WorleyParsons believes in continuous improvement and strives to have a lasting, positive impact on their employees.

The Award of Excellence in Employment is awarded to a person, team or organization that has made a significant contribution to a barrier-free, inclusive environment within the workplace.

Tracey Howell, Council member; Geoff Rackette, Vice President Business Services and Systems accepting the Award of Excellence in Employment on behalf of WorleyParsons and Honourable Frank Oberle, Deputy Chair of Council.

Premier's Council Award of Excellence in Education

Taisa McRorie – Edmonton

Taisa McRorie has been breaking down stereotypes and teaching about the values of inclusion since play-school. Her dream is one where every student is responsibly and authentically included in school, and where persons who live with a disability have the same opportunities as every other student.

Taisa sent a message of inclusion throughout her educational experience with Edmonton Public Schools. She is currently attending the music program at Grant MacEwan University.

Taisa is a strong, award-winning leader who happens to live with a disability. In June, Taisa also received a Leadership Award from the Edmonton Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Board.

The Award of Excellence in Education is awarded to a person, team or organization that has made a significant contribution to a barrier-free, inclusive program, classroom or facility.

Tracey Howell, Council member; Taisa McRorie with the Award of Excellence in Education and Honourable Frank Oberle, Deputy Chair of Council.

Premier's Council Awards of Excellence in Community

Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured's Community Integration Program team – Calgary

Since 2002, the Community Integration Program (CIP) team, with the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured (ARBI), has been helping survivors of severe brain injury, including stroke, to reintegrate into their communities. In 2012-13, the CIP team enabled 59 brain injury survivors to access their communities safely.

As part of recovery, returning to the community provides people with the opportunity to increase independence, gain new skills, and develop new leisure interests. CIP provides barrier-free leisure opportunities by providing support or adaptations as necessary to help people recovering from brain injury participate in everyday life. This enables survivors to engage in meaningful activities such as art classes, gardening, volunteering and fitness to improve their self-esteem, sense of broader community and overall quality of life. Survivors significantly increased access to their communities after completing this ARBI program.

The Award of Excellence in Community is awarded to a person, team or organization that has made a significant contribution to a barrier-free, inclusive environment within their community.

Council Membership

Members of the public are recruited to vacant positions when needed. The position description located on the Council's website outlines the skills, experience, knowledge and diversity that is required for the Council so that a cross-disability perspective and the best possible advice can be provided to government. Members are appointed by Orders in Council. All members appointed receive an orientation to the Council.

For more information, visit humanservices.alberta.ca/PremiersCouncil.

The Council would like to thank the former Deputy Chair, Honourable Frank Oberle, Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities. Mr. Oberle left Council in December 2013, after his appointment as Minister of Aboriginal Relations. His invaluable support during his involvement is appreciated.

Council would also like to thank Don Bojarski, Mike Hambly, John Latter, Amber Skoog and Pamela Wagner, who had terms that ended during this past year, for their dedication and work on Council. Your time and commitment were valued and all of you will be greatly missed.

Council welcomed members appointed in September 2013: Betty Lou Benson, Ted Bonar, Bill Brandon, Kristie Elgersma, Tracey Howell, Janalee Morris and Sheila Serup. Council would like to acknowledge Ted and Kristie's contributions during their time on Council.

Biographies

Mike Hambly – Chair
(2015 – 2018)

Mike Hambly of Calgary currently owns and operates a business that removes barriers for persons with disabilities by converting business cards and other communication tools into alternate formats. Mike has also worked in the not-for-profit sector, including the Canadian Paraplegic Association, the Independent Living Resource Centre and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. He has participated on a number of committees, including the Access Calgary Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on Accessibility, and many other disability-related committees.

Mike brings a unique perspective to Council. He is blind, has paraplegia and uses a guide dog that is trained to support his use of a manual wheelchair.

Honourable Frank Oberle
Deputy Chair
(2012 – 2018)

Frank Oberle is the MLA for Peace River and was the Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities. Mr. Oberle has also previously served as Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, and Chief Government Whip.

Mr. Oberle is an active member of the community and has been involved with many boards and organizations, including the Watts Harvesting Committee, the Alberta Forest Research Institute, the Economic Development Board for Peace River, RCMP Community Advisory Board and Peace River town council.

Kelly Lou Stewart
CEO & Legend

Kelly Lou Stewart of Tsilhqot'in Lake has 26 years of experience working in BC and Alberta in human services through various supervisory, management and coordination roles. She has an educational background in Human Services, managing social service and not-for-profit organizations, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) services and policy governance.

Kelly Lou has experience in managing facilities, support services for persons with disabilities and working with Aboriginal communities. She is currently the Coordinator for the Central Alberta FASD Service Network. Kelly Lou brings representation from central Alberta and FASD expertise to the Council.

Dan Kopperud, CEO
Legend

Dan Kopperud is from St. Boldo, near St. Paul. He is a businessman who has demonstrated great capacity for and success in hiring employees with a variety of disabilities.

As a result of his experiences, Dan promotes inclusive employment practices. He is an industrial engineering technologist and past director of the St. Paul and District Chamber of Commerce. Currently, Dan is the president of Two Hills and District Chamber of Commerce.

Research on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Amber Strong (2004 – 2014)

Amber Strong of Picture Butte, near Lethbridge, has considerable experience working with seniors and persons with disabilities. She has an educational background in health and education.

Amber has a strong interest in accessible education for students with disabilities. She currently works as an alternate format editor with Lethbridge College.

Amber lives with reduced vision and is dedicated to using her personal experience and substantial knowledge to address disability issues for individuals and communities.

Pamela Wagner (2008 – 2014)

Pamela Wagner is a registered social worker and certified human resources professional. She has worked for 30 years in not-for-profit disability service organizations, helping people and organizations make a better connection between themselves and their environment.

Pam holds a Master of Educational Psychology degree with a specialization in rehabilitation services. She owns and operates a human resources company in Medicine Hat and previously served on the board of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work.

Carmen Blyton
(2014 – current)

Carmen Blyton of St. Albert was previously the CEO of Special Olympics Alberta, the President of the Multiple Sclerosis Society (Alberta Division), Director of Development for the Arthritis Society (Alberta and NWT Division), Managing Director of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation and Executive Director of the Southeast Edmonton Seniors Association.

Carmen currently works with health and disability associations, and is well known and respected for her knowledge and commitment to people with disabilities. As Carmen herself has Multiple Sclerosis, she also brings the perspective of having a progressive disability. She has a keen interest and experience in the challenges families face when they have a child with disabilities.

Financial Information

Council funding falls under the ministry of Human Services. Council members' expenses are publicly disclosed quarterly at http://alberta.ca/travelandexpensedisclosure.cfm. **Other financial information is included in the Human Services Annual Report at** http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/publications/478.html

Contact Information

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THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL
ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES